



Kurt E. Floren
Agricultural Commissioner
Director of Weights and Measures

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

*Department of
Agricultural Commissioner/
Weights and Measures*

12300 Lower Azusa Road
Arcadia, California 91006-5872
<http://acwm.lacounty.gov>



Richard K. Iizuka
Chief Deputy

ADOPTED


BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

March 24, 2015

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

#1

March 24, 2015


PATRICK OGAWA
ACTING EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Supervisors:

2015 BRUSH CLEARANCE/WEED ABATEMENT REFEREES' HEARING REPORT (ALL DISTRICTS) (3-VOTES)

SUBJECT

Annual abatement of hazardous vegetation is a critical component of the overall fire prevention infrastructure throughout most of Los Angeles County. The actions, which are requested of your Board in this Board Letter, are part of the legal process that is required to carry out this critical public safety function. The abatement of hazardous vegetation is completed by a joint effort of the Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (ACWM) and the Consolidated Fire Protection District of Los Angeles County (District).

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD ACTING AS THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND AS THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Accept the Referee Hearing Report.
2. Order ACWM and the District to enforce the removal of hazardous brush, dry grass, weeds, rubbish, illegal dumping, combustible growth or flammable vegetation, to include native and ornamental vegetation, from improved and unimproved properties in Los Angeles County as listed on the Resolution of the Board of Supervisors approved on January 13, 2015.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

Various properties, which are both improved and unimproved (vacant), were declared by prior Board

resolution to contain or have the potential to contain public nuisances due to hazardous vegetation or rubbish. By accepting the Referee Hearing Report and holding this hearing, ACWM and the District will be able to take the actions necessary to cause the public nuisances to be abated if not done so by the owners of the properties upon which the unsafe conditions exist. ACWM will continue to focus primarily on the unimproved (vacant) properties and the District will continue to work towards achieving fire safety on the improved properties.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

This action supports the following County Strategic Plan goals:

- Goal 1: Operational Effectiveness – Conducting nuisance abatement pursuant to the statutory authority of the California Health and Safety Code allows ACWM and the District to respond to hazards posed by weeds, brush, and rubbish more quickly and effectively than when using other nuisance abatement procedures. It also allows complete cost recovery for ACWM's role in this critical public safety function, and the District to recover costs for its enforcement efforts.
- Goal 2: Community Support and Responsiveness – This action strengthens ACWM's ability to respond to illegal dumping, which is a serious problem for the environment and many Los Angeles County communities.
- Goal 3: Integrated Services Delivery – Timely removal of hazardous weeds and brush helps to protect the life and property of many residents living in the areas covered by the ACWM/District Weed and Brush Abatement Program. Equally important, the program allows for defensible space between homes and potential brush fire, thus providing for a margin of safety for firefighters attempting to defend the homes.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

There is no net County cost.

ACWM will recover its expenses for abatement costs, including clerical functions such as mailings, boundary determination, data entry, etc., through direct assessments on the property taxes of individual properties.

The District will assess fines directly to private property owners of declared improved properties if they fail to comply with two official notices to abate hazards that constitute a public nuisance. Costs for abatement enforcement services beyond the annual inspection program are recovered by direct assessments to the tax roll. The County of Los Angeles Auditor-Controller has approved abatement enforcement costs of \$648 per improved parcel.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Weed, brush and rubbish abatement is conducted pursuant to California Health and Safety Code (Code) Sections 13879 and 14875-14922. The initial step of the process was the adoption of a resolution by the Board on January 13, 2015, during which time weeds, brush and rubbish on designated properties were declared to be a public nuisance. Following the resolution, a legal notice was mailed to each property owner in the form prescribed by Section 14892 of the Code.

After the notices had been mailed, public hearings were held before the Weed Abatement and Brush Clearance Referees in Arcadia and the Antelope Valley on February 18, 2015 and February 19,

2015, respectively. Twenty-five (25) property owners attended the public hearings where they were given individual consultation regarding program-related issues such as:

- Why their properties have been included in the program
- When their properties need to be cleared
- What needs to be done on the property to remove the hazard or public nuisance
- The inspection fee
- Clearance costs

Property owners who have objections to having their properties included in the program may appear before the Board during this hearing, as required by Section 14898 of the Code, after which the Board may allow or overrule any or all objections and order ACWM and the District to continue with abatement proceedings.

ACWM and the District will keep an account of the cost of abatement, including enforcement and inspection fees, and will render a report containing all itemized costs of abatement charges (Report) to the Board showing the cost of abatement on each separate parcel of land. Pursuant to Section 14910 of the Code, the Board shall receive and consider the Report at a hearing on July 28, 2015, during which time the Board will hear any objections from property owners liable to be assessed for the cost of the abatement that was required.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

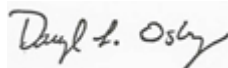
There will be no impact on current services.

Respectfully submitted,



KURT E. FLOREN

Agricultural Commissioner, Director of Weights
and Measures



DARYL L. OSBY

FIRE CHIEF, FORESTER & FIRE WARDEN

KEF:RKI:RBS:mm

Enclosures

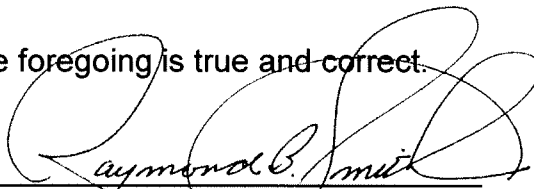
c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Auditor-Controller

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
)
) SS
)
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES)

RAYMOND B. SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR/BUREAU CHIEF, AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER/WEIGHTS AND MEASURES, being duly sworn, affirms: On or before the 2nd day of February 2015, as required by the State of California Health and Safety Code 14896, he mailed, or caused to be mailed, to the owners of each of the 28,214 properties as their names and addresses appear from the last equalized assessment roll, or as were known to the clerk, a notice or notices ("Annual Weed Abatement Notice") to destroy noxious or dangerous weeds or remove brush, rubbish and refuse, and setting the 18th and 19th days of February 2015 as the dates upon which owners of said property could attend a meeting of the Weed Abatement Referee, when their objections will be heard and given due consideration. Attached is a true and correct copy of such notice.

I have personal knowledge of the foregoing, and if called upon could competently testify thereto.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.


RAYMOND B. SMITH
Deputy Director, Bureau Chief

WITNESSED BY:

This 11th day of March, 2015




Myrna Madrid
Staff Assistant II
Weed Hazard and Pest Management Bureau

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
)
) SS
)
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES)

KEVIN T. JOHNSON, ASSISTANT CHIEF, FORESTRY, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT, being first duly sworn, says: That on or before the 2nd day of February 2015, he mailed, or caused to be mailed, all "Annual Brush Clearance Notices" to the owners of each of the properties described in the Declaration List, as their names and residential addresses and a description of the property in question appear from the last equalized assessment roll, or as known to the clerk, which notices request owners to destroy hazardous brush, dry grass, weeds, combustible growth or flammable vegetation, to include native and ornamental vegetation, and sets the 18th and 19th days of February, 2015, as the dates upon which owners of said property may attend a hearing of the Brush Clearance Referee, when their objections will be heard and given due consideration. Attached is a true and correct copy of such notice.

I have personal knowledge of the foregoing, and if called upon could competently testify thereto.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.



KEVIN T. JOHNSON
Assistant Chief, Forestry

WITNESSED BY:

This 11th day of March, 2015

Christie Camacho
NAME
Sr. Secretary III
TITLE



Kurt E. Floren
Agricultural Commissioner
Director of Weights and Measures

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Department of Agricultural Commissioner/ Weights and Measures

12300 Lower Azusa Road
Arcadia, California 91006-5872
<http://acwm.lacounty.gov>



Richard K. Iizuka
Chief Deputy

Annual Weed Abatement Notice

Dear Property Owner:

You are the recorded owner of a parcel of land, identified as Assessor's Identification Number (AIN):

| ASSESSOR'S IDENTIFICATION NUMBER | | | ZONE |
|----------------------------------|------|--------|------|
| MAPBOOK | PAGE | PARCEL | |
| | | | |

The following is a legal notice regarding hazardous conditions that are or could be on the parcel. The other side of this letter contains a much more detailed explanation of your responsibility as a property owner and how to get more information.

NOTICE TO DESTROY WEEDS, REMOVE BRUSH, RUBBISH AND REFUSE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT ON JANUARY 13, 2015, THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

passed or will pass a resolution declaring noxious or dangerous vegetation* or rubbish and refuse were growing or occurring upon or in front of property on certain streets in said city or unincorporated area of the County of Los Angeles, more particularly described in the resolution, and that they constitute a public nuisance which must be abated by the removal of said noxious or dangerous vegetation, rubbish and refuse. The resolution further declares that, if not abated, the vegetation and/or rubbish and refuse may be removed and the nuisance abated by County authorities in which case the cost of removal shall be assessed upon the lots or land from or in front of which the noxious or dangerous vegetation, rubbish and refuse are removed. Such cost will constitute a special assessment against such lots or lands. Reference is hereby made to said resolution for further particulars. In addition, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles authorized and directed the Agricultural Commissioner to recover its costs of details. All property owners having any objections to the proposed removal of noxious or dangerous vegetation, rubbish and refuse and the recovery of inspection costs, are hereby notified that they may attend a hearing at the following location(s):

WEED ABATEMENT REFEREE HEARINGS

(1) Arcadia

Wednesday, February 18, 2015, from 9:30 AM until noon at 12300 Lower Azusa Road, Arcadia, CA 91006 or

(2) Antelope Valley

Thursday, February 19, 2015, from 9:30 AM until noon at the Los Angeles County Administrative Bldg. 335 East Ave. K-10, Lancaster, CA 93535

A property owner may attend a public hearing before the Board of Supervisors on March 24, 2015, at 9:30 am.

You are not required to go to the public hearing(s). See reverse of this notice for more information regarding the public hearings.

**Including weeds, brush, tumbleweeds, sagebrush or vegetation that is not pruned or is otherwise neglected so as to attain such large growth as to become, when dry, a fire menace to adjacent improved property.*

This Notice Dated: February 2, 2015

Kurt E. Floren, Agricultural Commissioner

THE DEPARTMENT

We are the Los Angeles County, Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures. One of our missions is to help protect the lives and property of Los Angeles County residents through a Hazard Abatement Program (Program) conducted pursuant to the California Health and Safety Code sections 13879 and 14875-14922*

ABOUT THIS NOTICE

You received this notice because you were identified as the owner of the parcel referenced by the AIN number on the front of this document. Your name and address were obtained as they appeared on the last equalized tax assessment roll.

Your parcel (property) was included in the Program for one of the following reasons:

- ✓ Weeds, brush or neglected vegetation are, or could grow to be, close enough to a house or other structure to pose a fire hazard to the house.
- ✓ Weeds or brush are close enough to a road to jeopardize use of the road in the event of a fire.
- ✓ Accumulated piles of rubbish, refuse, trash, litter or other flammable material, etc., is or may be on the property creating a health or fire hazard, or some other public nuisance condition,
- ✓ (Antelope Valley only) Large amounts of tumbleweeds are, or may be, on the property which can blow off and spread, cause traffic accidents on the highway, damage agricultural crops or build up along fences, homes, etc.**

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

For your property

You are expected to maintain your property hazard free. Depending on the area, dry weeds, brush, or neglected vegetation within **100 feet up to 200 feet** from a home or other structure, or 10 feet of a road, are considered a hazard. Please contact us if you are not sure how much you are expected to clear or if you have any questions. If your vacant parcel is not within 100 feet of a home or other structure, it has been included in the Program because of the potential for tumbleweeds** (Antelope Valley only) or accumulations of trash.

The Hearings

The front of this notice has dates, locations and times for public hearings. They are provided to give property owners the chance to discuss the Program and bring up any concerns directly with Program staff.

YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO GO TO THE PUBLIC HEARING(S), however the **Weed Abatement Referee Hearings** may be good opportunities for you to:

- Find out exactly where your vacant property is located
- Learn why your property was included in the Program
- Provide us with information to help us determine if your property should be removed from the Program.

Change of Ownership

If you are no longer the owner of the property identified in this notice, please notify the L.A. County Assessor's Office, Ownership Services, at 1(888) 807-2111 (Toll Free), (213) 974-3211, or their website <http://assessor.lacounty.gov> immediately. If you sell or have sold the property, failure to disclose this legal notice to the new owner may make you liable for all hazard abatement charges assessed to the property.

Native Trees

In many areas of the County, certain native trees like oaks, walnuts and sycamores may be protected by County or City ordinances. Please contact our office prior to cutting or pruning any of these.

HAZARD ABATEMENT (CLEARANCE) TIMELINE

IMPORTANT! Don't clear your property too early. Your property may not need to be cleared at the time of receiving this notice. April 1, 2015, is the earliest the County will begin clearance operations. It could be much later in your area. The process of County inspections and abatement can take up to several months, so if you are planning to maintain your own property, let us know by using the enclosed Response Card or online at <http://acwm.lacounty.gov> no later than **March 15, 2015**. You will then be sent a clearance deadline specific to your area. For more information visit our website or call our office.

Regrowth of vegetation due to late rainfall may result in the need for more than one clearance during the year.

After **April 1, 2015**, the County will begin systematically inspecting parcels and, if hazardous weeds, brush or trash are present, the County will abate the hazard(s).** The cost of the abatement will be assessed to the parcel appearing as a separate item (LA CO HAZ ABATE) on the annual tax bill.

INSPECTION FEE

The Board of Supervisors has authorized an Inspection Fee of **\$41.77** which will be assessed on all affected properties whether or not they are cleared by the property owners.

HOW TO CONTACT US

You may communicate with us using the enclosed Response Card, online at <http://acwm.lacounty.gov> or by telephone at (626) 575-5484.

* In the following cities, the Hazard Abatement Program is conducted pursuant to the California Government Code, sections 39560-39588: Arcadia, Commerce, Glendale, La Verne, Monterey Park, Palos Verdes Estates, Santa Fe Springs, and South Pasadena.

SPECIAL INFORMATION REGARDING TUMBLEWEEDS: Because of environmental factors, systematic inspections and abatement of current season's growth of tumbleweeds on parcels in the Antelope Valley will not begin until **October 1, 2015.

Dear improved Property Owner:

This is not a citation or summons. This is the first notice of inspection and a reminder that the County of Los Angeles Fire Department will be conducting annual brush clearance inspections within the next few months, or fuel modification inspections throughout the year.

The County Fire Code states that parcel owners are responsible throughout the year for the maintenance of all brush, flammable vegetation (native and/or ornamental), other combustible materials situated on their property, and for compliance with any applicable fuel modification plan.

General clearing requirements are listed on the reverse side of this notice. Please review these clearing requirements and take appropriate action prior to the annual inspection date for your area. Abatement of potential or existing hazards prior to the inspection saves the Fire Department and yourself valuable money and time and insures a safer community.

Brush Clearance inspections are scheduled to begin April 1 in the Antelope Valley, June 1 in the Coastal Area, and May 1 in all other areas. If hazardous fire conditions exist on your property at the time of inspection, you will be issued an Official Inspection Report which will indicate existing violations and provide specific clearing instructions and a compliance deadline.

Failure to comply with the Official Inspection Report issued at the time of the inspection will result in the imposition of a \$500 administrative fine. An additional \$648 direct assessment will be added to your annual tax bill as item CO FIRE ABMT ENF to recover the County of Los Angeles Fire Department costs related to the enforcement of the Fire Code. Additionally, if your parcel is inspected or cleared by the Agricultural Commissioner, an inspection fee of \$41.77 and the clearing costs will be placed on your annual tax bill as item LA CO HAZ ABATE.

In most cases, it is more cost effective to do the work yourself or to hire a vendor to do the work. A vendor list is available at your local jurisdictional fire station.

For additional information regarding specific clearing requirements, contact your local jurisdictional fire station or the Brush Clearance Unit at (626) 969-2375.

**NOTICE TO DESTROY HAZARDOUS BRUSH, DRY GRASS, WEEDS,
COMBUSTIBLE GROWTH OR FLAMMABLE VEGETATION TO
INCLUDE NATIVES AND ORNAMENTALS**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT ON JANUARY
13, 2015 THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF
THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

Passed or will pass a resolution declaring that hazardous brush, dry grass, weeds, combustible growth or flammable vegetation to include native and ornamental vegetation where growing upon or in front of said improved property as specifically described by parcel number in the resolution, to be a potential fire hazard or nuisance which, upon inspection by the County of Los Angeles Fire Department is verified to be an existing hazard or nuisance and violation of the County Fire Code pertaining to clearance of brush and vegetative growth, must be removed and the nuisance abated by the Agricultural Commissioner and the cost of removal assessed upon the land. In addition, the Board of Supervisors authorized and directed the County of Los Angeles Fire Department and the Agricultural Commissioner to recover their costs related to the enforcement of the fire code. All property owners having objection to the removal of brush, dry grass, weeds, combustible growth or flammable vegetation including natives and ornamentals are hereby notified that they may attend a brush clearance referee hearing (1) in the Antelope Valley at the LOS ANGELES COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BLDG., 335 A EAST AVE. K-10, LANCASTER, CA 93535, ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2015 AT 9:30 A.M. or (2)

**BRUSH CLEARANCE REFEREE AT 12300 LOWER
AZUSA RD, ARCADIA, CA 91006-5872, ON
FEBRUARY 18, 2015 AT 9:30 A.M. UNTIL NOON
PROTESTS WHICH ARE NOT RESOLVED WILL BE
SENT BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

when their objections will be heard and given due consideration. If the property owner does not want to present objections to the proposed removal of hazardous brush, dry grass, weeds, combustible growth or flammable vegetation, or the recovery of enforcement and abatement costs, he/she need not appear at the above mentioned meeting(s).

| ASSESSORS I.D. NUMBER | | | THIS NOTICE DATED |
|-----------------------|------|--------|-------------------|
| NAPBOOK | PAGE | PARCEL | 02-02-15 |
| | | | |

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

FIRE CHIEF

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT
PREVENTION BUREAU
BRUSH CLEARANCE UNIT
605 N. ANGELENO AVENUE
AZUSA, CA 91702-2904
(626) 969-2375

**ANNUAL BRUSH CLEARANCE
NOTICE 2015**

BRUSH CLEARANCE REQUIREMENTS

Thousands of homes are in serious danger of destruction by fire because of their proximity to brush-covered areas. Homes with wood shake roofs, wood siding, decks, patio covers or exposed eaves are particularly vulnerable to the spread of fire. Despite efforts by firefighters, wildland fires fanned by strong winds, can destroy homes. It is your legal responsibility to take the necessary action to clear vegetation around any given structures. A fire safe landscape creates a defensible space to help protect against approaching wildfires.

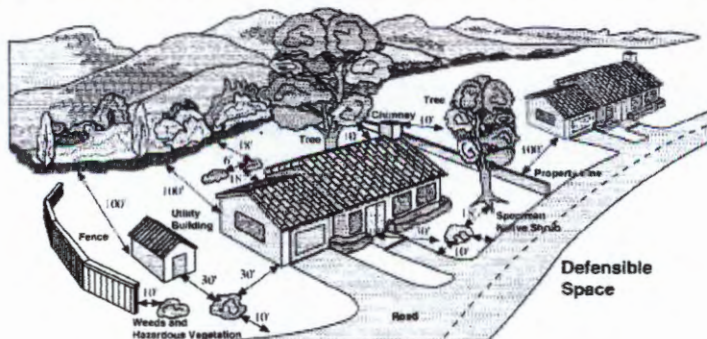
1. All flammable vegetation identified as a fire hazard by the inspection officer shall be mowed or cut to a stubble height of 3 inches, for 30 feet around any structure or 50 feet in high hazard areas (County of Los Angeles Fire Code 325.2.1(2), 325.2.2).
2. Thin remaining vegetation for the next 70 feet, for a total of 100 feet, around any structure by clearing, trimming, thinning, limbing up and removing flammable vegetation. For high hazard areas, this distance can be increased to a maximum of 200 feet (County of Los Angeles Fire Code 325.2.1(2), 325.2.2).
3. Specimen native trees, and shrubs are permissible, provided that they do not form a means of transmitting fire to any structure (County of Los Angeles Fire Code 325.2.1(2)). It is recommended that specimens shall be spaced a minimum of 15 feet or 3 times their diameter from other specimens, structures or surrounding native brush.
4. Access roads shall be maintained with a minimum of 10 feet of brush clearance on each side. Fire access roads shall have an unobstructed vertical clearance to the sky. Trees overhanging fire access roads shall be maintained to provide adequate vertical clearance (County of Los Angeles Fire Code 325.10, 503.1.1 through 503.6).
5. Provide a minimum of 3 feet of brush clearance around all fire hydrants (County of Los Angeles Fire Code 508.5.5).
6. It is required that all trees and shrubs shall be maintained free of dead wood and litter. Shrubs may be required to be trimmed up from the ground 1/3 of their height. Trees shall be trimmed up a minimum of 6 feet or 1/3 their height up to 40 feet, depending on surface fuels.
7. Trees are best trimmed during dormancy or during the winter months. Care should be taken when trimming trees during the spring as this is the nesting season for many species of birds.

All plants will burn under extreme fire weather conditions. Fire resistant plants burn at a relatively low intensity, at slow rates of spread and with short flame lengths. To best protect your home from fire, it is recommended that fire resistant plants be used when landscaping. A list of these plants can be obtained through the County of Los Angeles Fire Department, Brush Clearance Unit, telephone number (626) 969-2375.

BRUSH CLEARANCE MAINTENANCE IS A YEAR-ROUND RESPONSIBILITY

MINIMUM DISTANCES REQUIRED

EXTRA HAZARDOUS AREAS MAY REQUIRE 200 FEET OF CLEARANCE



NOTE: Small lots may make these clearance distances impossible. You are only responsible to clear up to your property lines. Clearance of property adjacent to your lot is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner.

IF YOU ARE UNCLEAR AS TO THE CLEARANCE REQUESTED, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FIRE STATION